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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [IR](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: LNG TANKERS VULNERABLE TO TERRORISTS; TEXAS A&M
HELPS QATAR FILL GAPS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH E. LEBARON, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

(C) KEY POINTS:

-- The dean of Texas A&M University in Qatar believes that Qatar's Liquefied Natural Gas facilities and tankers are vulnerable to attacks from terrorists or the Iranians.

-- Qatar lacks contingency plans for an attack, but Texas A&M is partnering with the oil company BP to run simulations to understand how such a disaster might unfold and be dealt with.

-- The Qatari Government is funding research at Texas A&M in increasing the capacity of its desalination plants, which is a crucial issue, as Qatar's reserves of drinking water are currently no more than 48 hours.

COMMENT: Qatar has steep challenges ahead in securing its gas extraction and shipping network, but with an institution of the caliber of Texas A&M, it is developing the human resources it needs. Like the other U.S. universities here, however, the majority of its students are not Qatari. At the same time, the mandated "Qatarization" of the work force means that many of the non-Qataris must seek employment outside Qatar even while Qatar seeks to retain high-quality scientists and engineers it needs - and is now educating - to face these daunting challenges.

11. (C) Ambassador August 11 paid an introductory visit to Mark Weichold, the Dean of Texas A&M University in Qatar (TAMU-Q), and heard Weichold's views on the future of Qatar's energy environment. Because Iran and Qatar share the world's largest non-associated natural gas field, he explained, Qatar must delicately balance its relationship with Iran, due in no small part to the vulnerability of Qatar's Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities and tankers. While an LNG tanker -- of which Qatar has 70 and has ordered more -- is not double hulled, its payload is somewhat protected inside domes that hold the super-cooled gas.

12. (C) The real problem, Weichold explained, is that no one really knows what would happen if an LNG tanker sank due to a breach of its hull that did not ignite the gas. For that reason, TAMU-Q has partnered with BP and the Qatari Firefighter Training School to simulate what would happen to the gas under various scenarios, and how it might burn if dispersed. Dealing with a sunken tanker with intact gas storage chambers is another challenge that scientists "are just beginning to grapple with," Weichold said. "We don't even know how to transfer gas from one tanker to another -- I don't believe it's ever been done," he added, noting that these were the types of problems that TAMU-Q students and researchers were tackling with their Qatari and international

oil company partners.

¶3. (C) Another major vulnerability that TAMU-Q is helping Qatar confront is the lack of sufficient capacity at the country's desalination plants. According to Weichold, Qatar currently has only 48 hours of drinking water reserves, which is why TAMU-Q has been given a USD 12 million grant by the Qatar National Research Fund to conduct research on increasing the capacity of those plants. Researchers are currently studying the use of solar energy and a technique to enhance reverse-osmosis desalination.

¶4. (U) Weichold noted that TAMU-Q, which has been in Qatar for five years, currently has 350 students, only 40% of whom are Qatari. Those Qataris, however, are virtually all sponsored by a local company that guarantees them a job upon graduation. Non-Qataris try to navigate between the Qatari Government's strong desire to see its highly skilled jobs filled by Qataris and the requirements of the scholarships that many receive, which require them to work for five years in Qatar.

LeBaron